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FOREST INSECT CONDITIONS IN ALASKA - 1961

Black-headed Budworm and Spruce Budworm

The major insect pest of the forests of southeastern Alaska continue to be the black-headed budworm Acleris variana. Extensive surveys during the past growing season showed conditions south of Frederick Sound little changed from 1960. Heaviest concentrations in this area were again found in the east central portion of Prince of Wales Island. While the present insect populations pose no immediate threat to the host trees, western hemlock and Sitka spruce, ample numbers of budworms are expected for studies attending the proposed spraying in the Skowl Arm area with DDT in 1963. The heaviest counts of budworms found this season were in newly surveyed adjacent shores of Baranof and Chicagof Islands. Since no samples were taken here in 1960, it is not known if the counts recorded are increases over last year. Developments in this area will be carefully watched next season. In general it may be said that the commonly associated hemlock sawfly Neodiprion Tsugae was found to be sporadically distributed and nowheres collected in significant numbers.

An extensive survey (twenty-five miles of shoreline examined without running out of the infestation) in the Kachemak Bay area of Cook Inlet has revealed the presence of a defoliator on the spruces found there. No Identifications have been made from samples submitted to the experts, but the damage looks characteristic of the spruce budworm Choristoneura fumiferana. Natives in the area reported to the Bureau of Land Management's forester, that 1961 was the second season of heavy defoliation. The identity of the insect causing the damage will be determined as quickly as possible and an appraisal made of the damage being done. Spruce in this area is of commercial quality and may warrant control measures for protection against this defoliator.

Bark Beetles

Bark beetle conditions throughout Alaska have continued rather much the same as those reported from the 1960 season, with endemic populations generally present, while in certain areas near epidemic conditions continue. Illustrative of the near epidemic conditions are those of the cedar bark beetles on Kuiu and Kosciusko Islands, and the Alaska spruce beetles on the Kenai Peninsula, and the Copper River area. Intermittent bark beetle attacks must be expected in the predominantly overmature coniferous stands commonly found throughout Alaska.

It is conceivable that in some instances increasing values will justify individual tree treatment to control bark beetle outbreaks. Recreational areas will doubtless be the first areas to be considered for treatment. Areas on the Chugach National Forest, and the Kenai Peninsula will be examined with a view to conducting a pilot test for controlling bark beetle through treatment of individual trees.